

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 07034 141745Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 7034

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, GR
SUBJECT: TERRORISTS: RECENT BOMBING INCIDENTS

1. OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS OR SO THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF ISOLATED BOMBING INCIDENTS IN THE ATHENS AREA ASSOCIATED WITH EITHER LEFT-WING OR RIGHT-WING GROUPS. RECENTLY (JULY 23 AND AUGUST 6) TWO SERIES OF SUCH BOMBINGS OCCURRED WHICH WERE GENERALLY ATTRIBUTED TO RIGHT-WING TERRORISTS. THE INCIDENTS WERE FOLLOWED BY EXTENSIVE PRESSPLAY INCLUDING CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM IN OPPOSITION NEWSPAPERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS INEFFECTIVE IN ITS EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARREST THOSE RESPONSIBLE.

2. BOMBING INCIDENTS IN THE ATHENS AREA SINCE 1975 HAVE INVOLVED THE BOMBING OF POLITICAL PARTY HEADQUARTERS OR OFFICES (BOTH CONSERVATIVE AND LEFTIST), BOOKSTORES AND THE LIKE (AND ALSO THE FIREBOMBING OF VEHICLES BELONGING TO MEMBERS OF THE US FORCES HERE). EARLIER THIS YEAR THE BOMBING OF TWO ATHENS THEATERS RESULTED IN A NUMBER OF CASUALTIES. THE JULY 23 AND AUGUST 6 BOMBINGS CONSISTED OF SCATTERED EXPLOSIONS THROUGHOUT THE CITY WITH NO APPARENT PATTERN OR SPECIFIC PURPOSE. TWO CARS WERE DESTROYED ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY ONLY INCIDENTALLY. THE BOMBS WERE PRIMARILY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ATHENS 07034 141745Z

ATTENTION-GETTING, DAMAGE WAS LIMITED AND THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT NEO-FASCIST, PRO-JUNTA INDIVIDUALS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR BOTH INCIDENTS. ORDNANCE EVALUATIONS LINK THE TWO INCIDENTS IN THAT THE SAME MATERIAL AND METHOD OF DETONATION WAS USED FOR BOTH SERIES OF BOMBS.

3. IN THE WAKE OF THE JULY 23 EXPLOSIONS A NUMBER OF ARRESTS WERE

MADE WITH NINE INDIVIDUALS (INCLUDING TWO RESERVE ARMY OFFICERS) STILL BEING DETAINED. THOSE ARRESTED REPORTEDLY HAVE CONNECTIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL FASCIST (NEO-NAZI) ORGANIZATIONS. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT THE INVESTIGATING MAGISTRATE HAS UNCOVERED EVIDENCE LINKING FORMER DICTATOR IOANNIDIS (NOW IN PRISON) TO THE TERRORIST GROUP, BUT THE POLICE HAVE ASSERTED THEY HAVE NO SUCH EVIDENCE. THE CONTINUING INVESTIGATION HAS FAILED SO FAR TO LEAD TO THOSE REALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BOMBINGS.

4. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL EDITORIALS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER BALKOS FOR ALLEGEDLY FAILING TO PURSUE THE INVESTIGATION INTO THESE TERRORIST ACTIVITIES WITH SUFFICIENT VIGOR. MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION PRESS, WHICH HAS BEEN CARPING AT HIM FOR SOME TIME, HAS IMPLIED THAT BALKOS IS NOT SINCERELY TRYING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE INCIDENTS OR TO FIND THE TERRORIST LEADERS. PRESS REPORTS SUGGESTED LAST WEEK THAT THE PRIME MINISTER BECAME SUFFICIENTLY CONCERNED OVER THE SITUATION TO INTERVENE PERSONALLY AND DIRECT THAT THE EFFORTS TO FIND THE PERPETRATORS OF THE BOMBINGS BE INTENSIFIED. MEANWHILE, BECAUSE OF THE WILD SPECULATION ABOUT THESE CASES IN THE PRESS, ON AUGUST 11 THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR IMPOSED A BAN ON PRESS REPORTING ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION.

5. THE GOVERNMENT HAS TRIED TO DOWNPLAY EXAGGERATED PRESS CLAIMS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CABINET HAVE BEEN DEVOTING CONSIDERABLE TIME TO THESE INCIDENTS AND OFFICIALLY DENIED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ATHENS 07034 141745Z

AUGUST 11 THAT SEVERAL CABINET MEETINGS HAD BEEN HELD RECENTLY IN CONNECTION WITH TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. A RELIABLE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCE HAS TOLD US THAT ANY ONE OF SEVERAL "ANARCHIST" GROUPS COULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE JULY 23 AND AUGUST 6 BOMBINGS. SUSPECTS, WE UNDERSTAND, NUMBER NO MORE THAN 30 AND THE POLICE HAVE EVIDENCE WHICH LINKS THEM WITH "FASCISTS ABROAD". SO FAR, HOWEVER, THE INVESTIGATION HAS NOT UNCOVERED ANY SOLID EVIDENCE IDENTIFYING THE BOMBERS OR THEIR AFFILIATION, ALTHOUGH THE POLICE DOUBT THE PARTIES RESPONSIBLE HAVE ANY NATIONAL FOLLOWING. MEANWHILE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN SOME SENSITIVITY TO THE CRITICISM BY THE OPPOSITION THAT THESE RECENT BOMBINGS WERE JUNTA INSPIRED OR CONNECTED. DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF, FOR EXAMPLE, STATED AUGUST 11 THAT THE EXISTENCE OF A POSSIBLE JUNTA CONSPIRACY IN THE ARMED FORCES WAS "COMPLETELY IMPROBABLE" AND EVEN IF SOME MACHINATIONS ARE TAKING PLACE THE NECESSARY MEASURES EXIST SO AS TO NEUTRALIZE THEM IMMEDIATELY. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, AVEROFF CONTINUES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SOME JUNTA REMNANTS STILL EXIST IN THE ARMED FORCES AND SOMETIMES ENGAGE IN FOOLISH ACTIVITIES.

6. COMMENT: WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE EARLIER THEATER BOMBINGS WHICH RESULTED IN SEVERAL CASUALTIES, THE BOMBINGS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKING PLACE IN THE ATHENS AREA SINCE 1975 HAVE NOT BEEN THE

CAUSE FOR SERIOUS ALARM OR CONCERN. THE OPPOSITION SEIZED ON THE TWO MOST RECENT SERIES OF BOMBINGS TO ATTACK THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER, A KNOWN CONSERVATIVE HARD LINER, AND ALSO TO PUSH THE CHARGE AGAIN THAT JUNTA TYPES HAVE NOT BEEN PURGED ADEQUATELY. THIS, IT IS ARGUED, LEADS TO LAWLESS TERRORIST ACTS SUCH AS THESE BOMBINGS AND THE FAILURE OF THE POLICE TO ARREST THOSE GUILTY. OTHERS CLAIM THAT THE JUNTA SYMPATHIZERS AND NEO-FASCISTS BEHIND THE BOMBINGS SEEK TO DESTABILIZE THE GENERALLY CALM POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE PREVAILING IN GREECE SINCE THE FALL OF THE JUNTA. THE LATTER THEORY MAY NOT BE FAR OFF THE MARK. IN ANY CASE, HOWEVER, WE WOULD AGREE WITH THOSE OBSERVERS WHO SAY THAT THE BOMBINGS, WHILE TROUBLESOME, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE FAILURE SO FAR TO IDENTIFY PRECISELY WHO IS BEHIND THEM, DO NOT FOR THE PRESENT REPRESENT A SERIOUS THREAT TO LAW AND ORDER OR TO THE STABILITY

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PAGE 04 ATHENS 07034 141745Z

OF THE KARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT.
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